

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-18 and 20-22 are pending.

Claims 4, 5, 8, 9 and 11 are cancelled herein.

Claim 19 was previously cancelled.

Claim 22 remains unchanged.

Claims 1-3, 6, 7, 10, 12-18, and 20-21 are amended herein.

Claim 23 is newly added herein.

The status of the claims is as follows:

1. (Currently amended) ~~An improved~~ A therapy to inhibit the occurrence of premature labor or ~~improve the outcome of premature labor~~ delay delivery closer to the due date for delivery in a pregnant animal experiencing excess free radical generation, said therapy comprising:

administering to said pregnant animal a free radical scavenger or a precursor thereto selected from the group consisting of glutathione, superoxide dimutose, catalase, glutathione peroxidase, and N-acetylcysteine, in an amount effective to inhibit said occurrence or ~~improve said outcome~~ achieve said delay.

2. (Currently amended). The ~~improved~~ therapy of Claim 1 further comprising:

administering to said pregnant animal an antibacterial agent in an amount effective to inhibit infection in said pregnant animal.

3. (Currently amended). The ~~improved~~ therapy of Claim 1 further comprising:

administering to said pregnant animal a tocolytic agent in an amount effective to inhibit uterine contractions in said pregnant animal.

4. (Cancelled).

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Currently Amended) ~~An improved A~~ therapy to inhibit the occurrence of premature labor or delay delivery closer to the due date for delivery ~~improve the outcome of premature labor~~ in a pregnant animal, said therapy comprising:

administering to said pregnant animal a free radical scavenger or a precursor thereto, in an amount effective to inhibit said occurrences or achieve said delay ~~improve said outcome~~, said free radical scavenger is a spin trapping compound.

7. (Currently amended). ~~An improved A~~ therapy for inhibiting the occurrence of premature rupture of the membranes in a pregnant animal experiencing excess free radical generation comprising:

administering to said pregnant animal a free radical scavenger agent, or precursor thereto selected from the group consisting of glutathione, superoxide dimutose, catalase, glutathione peroxidase, and N-acetylcysteine in an amount effective to inhibit said occurrence of premature rupture.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Cancelled).

10. (Currently amended) ~~An improved A~~ therapy for inhibiting the occurrence of premature rupture of the membranes in a pregnant animal comprising:

administering to said pregnant animal a free radical scavenger agent, or precursor thereto, in an amount effective to ~~inhibit~~ inhibit said occurrences of premature rupture, said agent is a precursor of said free radical scavenger and is a spin trapping compound.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently amended). ~~An improved A~~ therapy for delaying delivery closer to the due date for delivery ~~improving the outcome of preterm deliveries~~ of a pregnant animal experiencing excess free radical generation comprising:

administering to said pregnant animal at least one spin trapping ~~reactive oxygen species inhibiting~~ compound or a precursor thereto in an amount effective to achieve said delay ~~improve said outcome of preterm deliveries~~.

13. (Currently amended). The ~~improved~~ therapy of Claims 1, 7, or 12 wherein said animal is selected from the group consisting of monkeys, cows, sheep, chickens, horses, dogs, cats, and elephants.

14. (Currently amended). The ~~improved~~ therapy of Claims 1, 7, or 12 wherein said animal is mammal.

15. (Currently amended). The ~~improved~~ therapy of Claims 1, 7, or 12 wherein said animal is a reptile.

16. (Currently amended). The ~~improved~~ therapy of Claims 1, 7, or 12 wherein said animal is an amphibian.

17. (Currently amended). The ~~improved~~ therapy of Claims 1, 7, or 12 wherein said animal is human.

18. (Currently amended). The ~~improved~~ therapy of Claims 1, 7, or 12 wherein said animal is a high risk patient selected from the group consisting of patients with a history of preterm labor, patients with preterm labor, cocaine users, preeclamptic patients and patients with preterm premature rupture of membranes.

19. (Previously cancelled)

20. (Currently amended) The ~~improved~~ therapy of Claims 1, 7 or 12 wherein at least one reactive free radical scavenger is a spin trapping nitrone, spin trapping nitroxide or spin trapping salicylate.

21. (Currently amended) The ~~improved~~ therapy of Claim 20 wherein the nitrone is phenyl-butyl nitrone, or trimethoxyphenyl-butyl nitrone.

22. (Original). A method for detecting *in utero* formation of free radicals capable of inducing fetal damage or leading to preterm labor, the method comprising:

administering a spin trap agent passable through the placental membrane and having different magnetic resonance spectra before and after a free radical is trapped;

detecting by magnetic resonance imaging the location and amount of spin trapping agents that have interacted with a free radical;

wherein the location and amount of free radical activated spin trapping agents shows the presence and amount of free radical species.

23. (New). A therapy to inhibit the occurrence of premature labor or delay delivery closer to the due date for delivery in a pregnant animal experiencing excess free radical generation, said therapy comprising:

administering to said pregnant animal a free radical scavenger, or a precursor thereto, in an amount effective to inhibit said occurrence or achieve said delay; and

administering to said pregnant animal an antibacterial agent in an effective amount to inhibit infection in said pregnant animal.